

**Preliminary
Amphibian and Reptile Survey
of the
Lewis and Clark National Forest: 1994**

A Report to:

USDA Forest Service

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ABSTRACT

A total of 40 surveys and several additional sightings were made in the Lewis and Clark National Forest (L&CNF) between May and September 1994. Most were surveys of ponds, lakes, seeps, streams or other wetlands, made by 1 or 2 individuals. Each survey took 10-200 person-minutes and consisted of a thorough search of the wetland perimeter and netting of near shore aquatic habitats for adults, eggs, larvae, and tadpoles. Stream sampling was done by hand and dipnet. Seeps were checked by rolling over rocks and logs in and near wet areas. In addition to surveys, sightings were made from road kills, vocal identifications or fortuitous sightings by other reliable individuals.

Localized areas across the entire forest were covered in the survey, with specific locations determined largely by priorities set by Mike Enk, Fisheries Biologist for the Lewis and Clark National Forest.

Six amphibians are reported from the L&CNF: Long-toed Salamander (*Ambystoma macrodactylum*), Tailed Frog (*Ascaphus truei*), Western Toad (*Bufo boreas*), Northern Chorus Frog (*Pseudacris triseriata*), Northern Leopard Frog (*Rana pipiens*), and Spotted Frog (*Rana pretiosa*). The Spotted Frog was the most widespread amphibian throughout the forest. The Tailed Frog and Long-toed Salamander were found in a few locations on the Rocky Mountain Ranger District (RMRD). The Western Toad was found in very small numbers on the RMRD in 1994. Historically it has also been reported in the Highwood, Little Belt, and Crazy Mountains; however it was not found during our surveys. Given the apparent region-wide declines in this species, all sightings should be reported. The Northern Leopard Frog was reported historically from a single site on the RMRD and several sites in the Highwood Mountains on the L&CNF; none were found on the L&CNF in this survey. It also has been reported historically from numerous prairie ponds, outside and at lower elevations than L&CNF lands. Northern Leopard Frogs are nearly extirpated from western Montana, and anecdotal evidence indicates a decline elsewhere in Montana (except the southeast corner); all sightings should be reported. The Northern Chorus Frog was common in prairie ponds, primarily outside and lower in elevation than L&CNF lands. Four other prairie-inhabiting amphibians have been recorded in the area, though in some cases well away from L&CNF lands; these include the Tiger Salamander (*Ambystoma tigrinum*), Great Plains Toad (*Bufo cognatus*), Woodhouse's Toad (*Bufo woodhousii*), and Plains Spadefoot (*Scaphiopus bombifrons*).

Eleven reptiles have been reported from near the L&CNF, but only two have been definitely reported from on the forest: the Western Terrestrial Garter Snake (*Thamnophis elegans*) and Common Garter Snake (*Thamnophis sirtalis*). Both were found in the RMRD and Little Belt Mountains. The Western Terrestrial Garter Snake also was found in the Big Snowy Mountains and there is a specimen record of the Common Garter Snake from the Highwood Mountains. The Rubber Boa (*Charina bottae*) and Racer (*Coluber constrictor*) have been recorded on the Helena NF just to the south and west of the L&CNF and therefore are likely to be found on the L&CNF as well. The Spiny Softshell (*Trionyx spinifera*) is present in large rivers at lower elevations; records include the Musselshell River near Shawmut and perhaps Canyon Ferry Reservoir. This species could also occur on the Smith or Judith Rivers. The following reptiles have been recorded in the area and may eventually be found on

lower elevation L&CNF lands: Painted Turtle (*Chrysemys picta*), Short-horned Lizard (*Phrynosoma douglasi*), Western Hognose Snake (*Heterodon nasicus*), Gopher Snake (*Pituophis catenifer*), Plains Garter Snake (*Thamnophis radix*), and Western Rattlesnake (*Crotalus viridis*).

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